

FIRST ROUGH DISCUSSION DRAFT (4/8/97)

Population

"We don't want Union County to become another Deschutes County with its population pressures, traffic congestion, and high cost of housing."

Description

Population growth places pressure on creating new jobs, building more homes, expanding urban growth boundaries, and expanding public services. Without careful planning it can cause increases in traffic congestion, crowded recreation sites, and bring the possibility of increased social and environmental problems. A shrinking population can be an indicator of a depressed and shrinking economy--making it more difficult to continue to afford to support quality schools, core community services, and for businesses to be profitable?

Changes in the composition of the population (age of residents, racial diversity, and income levels) can also place pressure on a community. An aging "graying" population will change the general tenor of the community. A different mix of services will be needed--e.g., more medical and fewer educational services. A community with a growing minority population offers opportunities to benefit from diversity, but it also requires an effort to accommodate different cultures and lifestyles. Persons who do not earn a living wage (estimated to be between \$7.50 and \$8.00 per hour) need assistance from social programs to help them house and feed themselves.

Definition

The population density in Union County in 1995 is 12 persons per square mile. The Center for Population Research and Census, Portland State University, estimates the population of cities and unincorporated area in Union County to be:

	1990	1995	Change	Percent Change 1990 to 1995
Cove	507	585	78	15.4%
Elgin	1,586	1,680	94	5.9%
Imbler	299	310	11	3.6%
Island City	696	830	134	19.3%
La Grande	11,766	12,370	604	5.1%
North Powder	448	530	82	18.3%
Summerville	142	150	8	5.6%
Union	1,847	1,920	73	3.1%
Unincorporated	6,307	6,365	58	0.1%
County Total	23,598	24,400	1,142	4.8%

The State of Oregon's Office of Economic Analysis reports U.S. population growth is expected to average 0.8 percent per year through 2020. This represents a slowing of population growth and the "graying" of America. Population growth in Union County is expected to be slower than population growth nationally and in the State of Oregon through 2020. The median age of residents will increase.

Projected Average Annual Percent Change in Population Growth Rate¹

Period	Union County	State of Oregon
1995-2000	0.43	1.68
2000-2005	0.39	1.28
2005-2010	0.39	1.21
2010-2015	0.39	1.18
2015-2020	0.40	1.12

there is no real science behind these #s though there is probably a lot of plausible guessing

Projected Union County Population by Age (Thousands)²

Age	2000?	2005?	2010??	2015?????
0-4	1.63	1.46	1.43	1.46
5-9	1.67	1.55	1.44	1.41
10-14	1.87	1.82	1.68	1.56
15-19	2.11	1.80	1.83	1.69
20-24	1.63	1.71	1.50	1.52
25-29	1.35	1.34	1.35	1.20
30-34	1.20	1.22	1.29	1.32
35-39	1.61	1.35	1.31	1.39
40-44	1.98	1.40	1.32	1.28
45-49	1.75	1.75	1.35	1.27
50-54	1.51	1.79	1.73	1.34
55-59	1.29	1.69	1.82	1.77
60-64	1.05	1.37	1.71	1.84
65-69	0.92	1.03	1.25	1.56
70-74	0.82	0.87	0.95	1.17
75-79	0.67	0.63	0.67	0.74
80-84	0.47	0.45	0.45	0.49
85+	0.48	0.57	0.61	0.63
Median Age	36.73	38.67	40.05	41.08

Interpretation

Unknown!
There were an estimated 24,400 people living in Union County on July 1, 1995, an increase of 1,442 people (+4.8%) from 1990 and an increase of 479 (2.0%) in the period since 1980. The median age of Union County residents in 1990 and 1995 was estimated to be 33.94 and 35.84 years of age, respectively. Union County will have a stable but aging population.

Evaluation

¹ Office of Economic Analysis, *Long-Term Population and Employment Forecasts for Oregon*, Department of Administrative Services, State of Oregon: Salem, January 1997.

² Woods & Poole Economics, Inc. *Union County, Oregon 1993 Data Pamphlet*, Washington, D.C., December 1993.

Unless there is a spurt in the growth of the population caused by more retirees moving to the county or new job and business opportunities attracting new people to the community seeking work, there will not be much pressure on existing infrastructure, services, and businesses to expand. Businesses' ability to grow will depend on their ability to provide goods and services to customers from outside the county. Demand for new housing will not place significant pressure on communities to expand urban growth boundaries.

Linkages:

this is a real issue regardless of population
Changes in the population have a significant and direct influence on land-use patterns (fewer pressures to build housing on or near farm and timber lands), the demand for public services, the need for infrastructure, and the ability of businesses to be profitable. The cost of housing is influenced by population growth, as the balance between supply and demand on housing stock changes. An aging population will mean the need for fewer classrooms and employers could have difficulty in hiring employees. - *desire for specific type housing is still a large*
It may mean also an increase of demand for housing 2.6 → 2.2 → 1.9?

An active, coordinated economic and business development effort by organizations in the county could affect the rate of population growth. Newly recruited businesses and existing business' owners who are encouraged to grow could create jobs that attract more, younger people who are raising families and could slow the aging of the county's population.

Sample Survey Questions

Q-1 Union County's population is predicted to grow from approximately 24,400 today to 26,542 in the year 2015, an increase of 2,142 people (8.8% over the 20-year period). This level of growth is essentially static and along with the predicted "graying" of the population will make the county less desirable as a place to live.

- 1 STRONGLY AGREE
- 2 AGREE
- 3 DISAGREE
- 4 STRONGLY DISAGREE

Q-2 The population of the community and/or the area of the county in which I live is just about right and I do not want to see it grow.

- 1 STRONGLY AGREE
- 2 AGREE
- 3 DISAGREE
- 4 STRONGLY DISAGREE

Q-3 Please circle the number next to the one statement that best indicates how you feel about population growth in Union County.

- See #2
- 1 Things are just fine now and the county's population should not grow.
 - 2 The slow population growth (less than one half of 1 percent per year predicted by the State of Oregon's demographer is about all Union County can accommodate.
 - 3 Moderate population growth (one to one and one half percent per year) is necessary for an economically healthy community.
 - 4 High population growth (more than 2 percent per year) is necessary for an economically healthy community.

Q-4 Please indicate what you believe to be the ideal Union County population size that will not adversely impact and might in some way improve your quality of life.

- 1 20,000 to 24,399
- 2 24,400 to 26,500
- 3 26,501 to 30,000
- 4 30,001 to 35,500
- 5 35,501 to 40,000
- 6 40,001 to 45,500
- 7 45,501 to 50,000
- 8 50,001 to 55,000
- 9 55,001 to 60,000
- 10 More than 60,000

Q-5 Please explain why you believe the population size you selected in Q-3 is ideal for Union County.

FIRST ROUGH DISCUSSION DRAFT (4/8/97)

Core Community Values

"I want my children to be able to stay in or return to Union County after they complete their educations without having to sacrifice economic security. The community needs to work together to develop opportunities for our children to come home after college."

Description

People who have the opportunity choose where they live do so for very personal reasons in addition to seeking economic opportunities. These reasons are often described as those "things" in a community people believe contribute to a high "quality of life." Residents of Union County hold many core community values in common--the "things" the majority of residents agree are important to maintaining a good, high quality of life for themselves, their families, and their neighbors.

Definition

County residents in public meetings, in response to surveys, and through participation in civic activities have described the characteristics of those "things" they believe to be manifestations of core community values. The values described have included:

- creating a climate supportive of new economic opportunities (an environment in which business can grow and prosper and new business and industry are attracted to the community to create new family-wage jobs) so our children do not live in poverty;
- providing our children and grandchildren safe family-centered home and community environments, healthful recreational pursuits, and challenging educational opportunities to prepare them to succeed in life in an increasingly competitive and technology driven world economy;
- having access to high quality, affordable health care for all county residents and the services needed to aid senior citizens remain independent;
- providing a mix of clean, safe, and affordable housing for residents in all income brackets;
- having a safe, crime free community;
- protecting the integrity of our agriculture and timber lands while promoting public

policies that, while protecting the environment for the future, will enable these sectors to continue to thrive and prosper as underpinnings of the county's economy; and

- participating in a "civil society" where a majority of residents can contribute to public policy discussions and where people can disagree agreeably without fear of ridicule--a community where differences of opinion are valued;

Interpretation

Perceptions of what constitutes a high "quality of life" is very personal. While each resident has different values, most believe the following community characteristics to be important:

- accountable, honest, and fiscally responsible government leaders;
- quality schools and challenging educational opportunities (kindergarten through graduate school, vocational training and retraining);
- safe neighborhoods and parks;
- a strong, *growing* economy, and health/business environment that provides family-wage job opportunities;
- accessible, affordable health care;
- active, involved citizens who volunteer in community activities, participate in public policy discussions, and vote;
- family-oriented community;
- accessible social services needed to ensure those who are unable to care for themselves are protected and able to live a healthfully and safely; and
personal commitment before government responsibility
- children are able to develop a sense of place and tradition that offers a sense of roots in a community they value.

Evaluation

Recent trends indicate Union County is making positive progress in some core community values areas and not in others. Our elected leaders are concerned, involved, and attending to public business (generally trying to figure out how to continue to provide public services with diminishing resources). The public schools, while struggling with diminished funding and flexibility in how money can be used, are implementing mandated curriculum changes, gaining

increased citizen involvement, and integrating the use of computers and "information age" telecommunications technology in instruction. Eastern Oregon University, while at enrollment capacity, is positioned to grow and provide new programs in service to the community. The university is recognized as being innovative in "brokering in" programs, creating partnerships, and pioneering the use of telecommunications technology.

There is increasing concern over the reportedly easy availability of drugs, the use of alcohol by youth, and teenage pregnancy. Voters have supported paying for expanded recreational opportunities and programs to engage youth in positive activities.

While Union County's unemployment rate remains lower than the rate in our neighboring counties, the community faces the specter of Boise Cascade laying off employees (a loss of approximately 60 jobs in Elgin) and the possibility of other future reductions. ~~New jobs are~~ being created by entrepreneurs in the community (e.g., Nash Trailers, Omnitrac, Reeves Cricket Ranch, Barreto Manufacturing, Fleetwood Travel Trailers, Grafunder Safe and Vault). Community members are pulling together to coordinate and cooperate in pursuing economic development opportunities--the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District has been granted a million dollars by the USDA Rural Development Administration for making business loans.

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Grande Ronde Hospital is a modern, profitable hospital that supports a wide range of medical services and contributes to the county's economy. The Elgin Clinic, Union Family Health Care Center, and Center for Human Development are extending primary care and mental health services to the smaller communities. The advent of the Oregon Health Plan has resulted in fewer county residents going without health insurance. It is believed "working poor" and a number of small business owners who earn too much money to qualify for the Oregon Health Plan cannot afford health insurance.

Community leaders are interested in fostering discussions about the public's vision for and the opinions about the direction each community and Union County should take in moving into a new future.

Linkages

The ability for a community to work together to improve the "quality of life" in large measure depends on the citizen's agreeing about what is important--on core community values. Public discussion and constructive debate help elected officials, staff members, and volunteers working with and for local governments and community-based organizations understand community priorities. The purpose of the Union County Growth Management project is to collect information about how residents believe Union County should be developed and related issues. We hope to identify those core community values about which most people agree and can be used as a basis for working together as we move into the next century.

Sample Survey Questions

Q-1 What is your **wishes and hopes** for the future of Union County for the next twenty years?

Health, Stable (good luck!), Work & Social
Environment

Q-2 What is your **fears and concerns** for the future of Union County for the next twenty years?

additional "restrictive" legislation that
hinders local initiative & ^{inhibits} self
determination / as opposed to "permissive"
legislation that facilitates (permits)
local options

- Q-3** Please indicate your opinion about the quality of life in Union County by placing an "X" on each scale to portray your view of the state of affairs in the county ten years ago (1987), at the present time (1997), and what it will be in the future (2007). "Ten" represents the highest quality of life and 0 represents the worst quality of life. Please do not rate 1987 if you did not live in the county 10 years ago.

	1987	1997	2007
Highest Quality of Life	—10—	—10—	—10—
	—9—	—9—	—9—
	—8—	—8—	—8—
	—7—	—7—	—7—
	—6—	—6—	—6—
	—5—	—5—	—5—
	—4—	—4—	—4—
	—3—	—3—	—3—
	—2—	—2—	—2—
Lowest Quality of Life	—1—	—1—	—1—
	—0—	—0—	—0—

- Q-4** The following statements deal with identifying if the community services identified as important and valued are adequate today, in 1997. (Please circle the number in the column next to each statement that best represents your answer.)

Do you presently have adequate

Item	YES	NO	NOT IMPORTANT	NOT APPLICABLE
a. Child care	1	2	3	4
b. Health care	1	2	3	4
c. Quality, affordable housing	1	2	3	4
d. Access to mental health services	1	2	3	4
e. Arts and entertainment opportunities	1	2	3	4
f. Educational opportunities for children In the K-12 public schools	1	2	3	4

Item	YES	NO	NOT IMPORTANT	NOT APPLICABLE
g. Educational opportunities at the college and university level	1	2	3	4
h. Vocational and job retraining	1	2	3	4
i. Access to public transportation	1	2	3	4
j. Access to recreational programs	1	2	3	4
k. Job and employment opportunities	1	2	3	4
l. Day care for aged and sick adults	1	2	3	4
m. Support services for senior citizens	1	2	3	4

UNION COUNTY GROWTH MANAGEMENT

There has been much debate in Union County about what represents acceptable economic and community development. This debate has been fueled by disagreements about what types of jobs should be sought by the community, the best use for limited vacant land zoned for heavy industrial use, and who is responsible ("who is in charge") of economic development efforts. However, no one really knows what the majority of county residents think about issues related to economic and community development because efforts to collect opinions about the issue have been limited to infrequent public meetings or discussions amongst a limited number of individuals who serve on boards and committees.

The Union County Growth Management Study to be conducted by the Regional Services Institute at Eastern Oregon University is sponsored by the Union County Board of Commissioners, the City of La Grande through a grant from the Oregon Department of Economic Development, and a number of local businesses. The study will involve a comprehensive, inclusive process to develop factual informational materials about economic and community development issues and conduct a public opinion poll to obtain a sense of how county residents feel about issues which have been identified as concerns within the community. The information gained through the process will be formulated in a report and provide a common database that can be used by various community organizations in formulating positive direction and plans toward what Union County residents believe to be a quality future.

At this time, the following elements will comprise the data base for the study and the public opinion poll. Additional elements may be identified through the public process.

Core Values

- Quality of life
- Community response

Sustainable Communities

- Sustainable society, economy, environment

Population

- Trends
- Current
- Future
- Impact on carrying capacity
- Urban Growth Boundaries
- Bailable lands
- Agricultural vitality/viability

Land Use

- Current distribution
- Capacity to absorb growth
- Appropriate mix of ownership/parcel size

*1st level general
multiple options
specific
geo, eco, political
we are independent & different*

Utility availability
Capacity of infrastructures
Interface of agriculture and urban
Rural centers

Infrastructure

Municipal services
Transportation
Energy
Telecommunications

Economic Diversification

Job/Industry mix--current and future
Type
Wage
Number of jobs
Sustainable wage
Cost of living
Basic needs

Housing

Appropriate mix
Quality of stock
Response to growth
Mix
Buildable lands